

Minutes of the Horticulture Forum Meeting

Tuesday 27 June 2017, 10:00 am, Manor Suite, Greenmount Campus, CAFRE

Chair: Keith Crawford

Present: Peter Donnelly, Barbara Erwin, Hamilton Loney, Roy Lyttle, Adrian Magowan, Robin McKee, Patrick Taggart, Graeme Wilkinson (DAERA Brexit Division)

1. Apologies

Barclay Bell, Patricia Erwin, John Shannon, Elaine Shaw, Doug Thomson

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2017 were agreed.

3. DAERA Brexit Team

Graeme Wilkinson, head of DAERA's Brexit Division, gave a presentation (see email attachment) outlining DAERA's response to the outcome of last year's Brexit referendum. There then followed a discussion in which Brexit concerns were raised. These included:

- Access to market outlets;
- Availability of labour, particularly seasonal labour;
- The National Living Wage;
- Inadequate support for research and development;
- The need for a project-based investment scheme aimed at smaller projects (the project-based tier of the FBIS-Capital scheme was only for projects of over £30,000);
- Competition from a better supported industry in Republic of Ireland;
- Limited export opportunities;
- Customer rejection of certain technologies (e.g. GM); and
- Possible administrative disruption to trade arrangements (e.g. changes to VAT arrangements).

4. Review of Balmoral Show 2017

All present agreed that the Forum's exhibit at Balmoral Show was a great success.

Barbara thanked Patrick for his support in the preparations for the Show and members also expressed gratitude to Patricia for her hard work before and during the Show. Patrick thanked Barbara and the rest of the Forum and pointed out that the success of the exhibition was down to team work.

Particularly successful elements of the exhibit included:

- Local cut flowers (excellent vase life and scent);
- Local strawberries (superior flavour);

- Local apple juice (excellent flavour);
- Availability of seating nearby;
- Vegetable plugs (an interesting novelty for many members of the public); and
- The ability to open the side of the marquee to draw more people.

Suggested areas for improvement included:

- Better exterior signage etc to attract more visitors;
- Improved differentiation between the ALCI and Growers NI parts of the exhibit (perhaps demonstration of garden design software);
- Possible inclusion of a small living wall;
- Better labelling of plants; and
- Participation of the mushroom sector.

Roy explained that his wife, Sheila, hadn't done any work with school groups at the Show because attempts to arrange a programme with Allan Hamilton (Brilliant Trails) were unsuccessful. She is willing to arrange activities for school groups at next year's Show.

Patrick pointed out that: under the terms of the NIRFP letter of offer, the Forum is still expected to organise a reception aimed at MLAs and/or customers; and arrangements will need to be put in place to submit a NIRFP claim.

Keith to ask Ian Duff to submit claim.

5. Nomination of charity to receive proceeds of Balmoral plant sales

The vegetable plug plants at Balmoral Show were offered to members of the public, at the close of the Show, in return for donations to charity. £185 was collected, which Hamilton made up to £200. It was agreed to forward the £200 to Perennial (<http://perennial.org.uk>). Hamilton gave the money to Patrick.

Patrick to arrange donation of £200 to Perennial.

6. Norah Stucken Award

While all agreed that the Forum's participation in Balmoral Show was a great success, the consensus was that it was not sufficiently innovative to justify nomination for the Norah Stucken Award (www.horticulture.org.uk/news/the-norah-stucken-award/).

7. AOB

Barbara suggested that the Forum should consider having its own Facebook page.

Members to consider this suggestion and consider ideas for content.

8. Date of next meeting

11 September 2017.